

Harris County

HCPHES

Public Health & Environmental Services

Herminia Palacio, M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director
2223 West Loop South
Houston, Texas 77027
Tele: (713) 439-6000
Fax: (713) 439-6080

Rita Obey
Director
Office of Public Information
2223 West Loop South
Houston, Texas 77027
Tele: (713) 439-6246
Fax: (713) 439-6362

August 17, 2010

Aerial Spray Operation Scheduled to Combat West Nile Virus

(Harris County, TX) -- Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES) Mosquito Control Division has scheduled an aerial spray operation for portions of west Harris County to combat mosquito borne disease. The aerial application will begin **Wednesday evening, August 18th** after dusk and continue until approximately 4:00am. It is anticipated that the aerial operation will take only one night to complete. The plan for the proposed aerial operation is to spray approximately 50,000 acres by air, weather permitting.

The insecticide, Dibrom (EPA-approved), is routinely used for aerial operations to combat mosquito borne disease and will be used during the spray operation in Harris County. While Dibrom is considered to be safe for the environment, some people may be sensitive to direct contact with the chemical. HCPHES asks that individuals go indoors while the aerial treatment is being conducted in your area.

The aerial spray operation is being conducted in response to recent surveillance findings indicating that West Nile Virus (WNV) activity has increased, especially in the west areas of Harris County. Dr. Rudy Bueno, Director of HCPHES Mosquito Control says, "Harris County experienced very hot, dry months in May and June followed by a wet July. This type of weather is conducive for increasing the risk for transmission of mosquito borne diseases like West Nile Virus. As a result, clusters of disease activity have been detected prompting the need to implement the aerial treatment in the designated areas."

To date, West Nile Virus has been confirmed in 117 mosquito samples.

Vector Disease Control, Inc. (VDCI) of Greenville, Mississippi will be conducting the aerial spray operation. VDCI holds a contingency contract with Harris County to provide aerial application of adulticides (insecticide used against adult mosquitoes) on an "as-needed" basis.

HCPHES continues to encourage residents to eliminate mosquito breeding habitats around their property. Remove or empty all outside containers that may hold water

such as flowerpots, tires and toys. Bird baths and pet water bowls should be changed at least twice a week. Clean out gutters and make sure windows and doors have proper screening. Do not “feed” the storm drains. Sweep up lawn clippings, leaves and tree limbs from sidewalks and driveways and dispose of them properly.

Practice personal protective measures to reduce the likelihood of being bitten by mosquitoes. When outdoors, use an insect repellent containing the active ingredient DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 and apply as directed on the label. If possible, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.

Historically, July through September has been the peak timeframe for disease transmission to humans in Harris County.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires notification to the public when aerial spray operations are to occur.

For additional information and/or maps of West Nile Virus activity in Harris County, visit our web site at www.hcphe.org.

###